

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez applauded today's passage of H.R. 3867 "The Small Business Contracting Program Improvements Act," by the U.S. House of Representatives by 334 to 80.

H.R. 3867 will improve contracting opportunities for small businesses across the 23rd District, including expanding programs for veteran- and minority-owned small businesses. The legislation additionally reauthorizes the Small Business Administration's HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Program, which stimulates economic development and creates jobs in urban and rural zones that span nearly all of the 23rd District by providing Federal contracting preference to small businesses in HUBZones (Historically Underutilized Business Zone).

Specifically, H.R. 3867 will:

- Give Small Businesses of Service-Disabled Veterans a Real Opportunity for Government Contracts by placing veteran small business owners at the top of the list for receiving federal contracts.
- Combat fraud and taxpayer waste by incorporating business integrity standards and requiring SBA to verify eligibility for the HUBZone program.
- Standardize SBA's contracting programs and increases the size of federal contracts available to small businesses to keep pace with the growth in the federal marketplace.
- Expand Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs to help level the playing field for women-owned businesses in federal contracting -- immediately.
- Modernize the 8(a) Program for minority-owned small businesses by bill updating the current economic eligibility standards for businesses (consistent with inflation).

Congressman Rodriguez included the following statement in the Congressional Record applauding The Small Business Contracting Program Improvements Act:

"Among the many improvements, The Small Business Contracting Program Improvements Act modernizes programs to increase opportunity to disadvantaged businesses that do not have proper access to the \$410 billion federal marketplace.

"This bill expands procurement opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses; a group that currently receives only a small fraction of their contracting goal. Further, it creates penalties for misrepresentation of a service-disabled veteran owned business classification and adopts a roadmap for providing information, advice and training to service-disabled veterans as prescribed by President. Finally, it provides discretion to contracting officers in cases that must now be set aside for HUBZones but that could be used for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses.

"Additionally, the bill modernizes the 8(a) Business Development Program. This program is to single most important vehicle for minority business participation in federal contracting. The 8(a) program has contributed to the development of over 20,000 firms, and these firms have received almost \$100 billion in federal contracts.

"Over 9,000 firms are currently participating in the 8(a) program. More than half of all federal minority business contracting is accomplished through the 8(a) program. Despite these impressive statistics, the program has not been revamped since 1988.

"Earlier this year, I joined my colleague Rep. Silvestre Reyes in sponsoring H.R. 1611, the 8(a) Modernization Act which was incorporated into this legislation.

"I would like to thank the Chairwoman, Ms. Nydia Velasquez for her work not only for this legislation but also her long time advocacy for our nation's small businesses."

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